



Adoptions 'give so much love'

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**By Kym Reinstadler
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OTTAWA COUNTY -- The opportunity to retire before age 50 had Maurice Young envisioning lots of leisure time for football, basketball and bicycling.

Now the Holland man is enjoying all that and more with five sons he and his wife, Enid, have adopted out of the foster care system over the last three years.

Probate Judge Mark Feyen finalized the adoptions of the youngest boys -- 7-year-old Duquanis "Johnny Mack" and 5-year-old T-Savion "Little Mo" -- on Tuesday in a special National Adoption Day celebration in Ottawa County Family Court.

Feyen confirmed the adoptions of six children by five Ottawa County families in the event, one of 34 scheduled in Michigan to coincide with the national observance, which seeks to heighten public awareness of foster children who are eligible for adoption.

"I'm grateful to God for this opportunity to be a positive role model in the lives of these boys," said Young, 51. "I hope having a good home will give them the foundation for making good choices and decisions in life, and one day make a good home themselves. I hope the pot of goodness spills over into the community."

Young said he was a "father" to his 22-year-old daughter, but didn't get the opportunity to be a "daddy" because the girl lived with her mother. He married for the first time 10 years ago.

Enid, who has sons who are 27 and 26, says she felt called by God to adopt. Maurice didn't feel the same desire until she hauled him to a meeting about foster children who need permanent homes.

The couple adopted Keith, now 13, in August 2000; and Demarcus, 11, and Michael, 9, in July 2000. Johnny Mack and Little Mo have been living with the Youngs since last summer.

"It takes a lot of love, time and patience to parent children who were neglected or maybe saw violence in their homes," Enid Young said.

"But the rewards far outweigh the work. You see them thriving in a stable environment, and getting a new lease on life. They give so much love."

Maurice says he's positive he's benefiting more from adoption than the sons he and Enid have adopted.

The Young family's story is not unlike the story of other Ottawa County families that grew by adoption Tuesday.

"Adoption is a wonderful end of the story for many children," Feyen said. "They typically come to this place on one of three roads: Because their birth parents can't raise them, because of abuse or neglect, or from other countries where they may have been impoverished.

"Often the circumstances are tragic, but adoption is the happy ending."

There were 119 adoptions in Ottawa County last year. The number climbed steadily through the 1990s, as cases of abuse and neglect in West Michigan grew, Feyen said. The number of adoptions has held steady over the past couple of years.

Feyen said he would like to see the number grow to include the 39 Ottawa County children who are in foster care, with their birth parents' rights terminated, and are awaiting adoption.

The local event was organized by the Ottawa Area Adoption Consortium, which includes Catholic Social Services of Muskegon and Grand Haven, Bethany Christian Services of Holland and the Family Independence Agency of Holland.

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